

TMDL Implementation Workshop: Valley Region Synopsis
Hosted by DEQ and DCR
Frontier Culture Museum, Staunton
February 24th, 2006

The TMDL Implementation Workshop, as the first of its kind in Virginia, sparked the interest of many people in the Valley Region. In all, sixty-four people attended the event, representing six state agencies and one federal agency, numerous city and county governments, three Soil and Water Conservation Districts, community interest groups and NGOs, contractors, and academic institutions. After registration and mingling over coffee and breakfast snacks,



Robert Brent (DEQ) began the workshop by welcoming folks to the Frontier Culture Museum from across the watershed and affirming the importance of participation in the TMDL process from all of the groups in attendance. Nesha Mizel (DCR) introduced eight individuals who have been involved in water quality improvement projects in the Valley Region and invited them to share a brief "Watershed Story". This was a chance to introduce individuals representing a

diverse group of organizations from around the region to each other as well as communicate their progress and challenges. In addition to the eight planned "Stories", two spontaneous tales were told; Carl Luebben, a Director of the Shenandoah Valley Conservation District, shared his perspective as someone who has been working on water quality issues in the Valley for over thirty years, and Steve Talley of the Canaan Valley Institute confessed his childhood antics in the renovated barn where the meeting was held. From these introductions and stories that which helped to break the ice and relax the atmosphere, participants broke out into the first session of the morning workgroups. The pre-planned



topics included: **Urban Issues** facilitated by Jim Echols and Jason Ericson (DCR), **Who's on First: Roles and Responsibilities** facilitated by Nesha Mizel (DCR) and Charles Martin (DEQ), **Clearing the Hurdles: Overcoming Obstacles** facilitated by Robert Brent (DEQ) and Theresa Carter (DCR), **Paying the Price: Funding** facilitated by Charlie Lunsford and Nicole Sandberg (DCR) and **All Aboard: Stakeholder/Landowner**

Participation facilitated by Tara Sieber (DEQ). Summaries of each workgroup discussion will be distributed to all participants in the upcoming weeks, and DEQ and DCR staff will be reviewing these summaries for improvements that could be implemented to the program. The same groups were offered in a second morning session allowing attendees to participate in more than one discussion. A break between the sessions was denoted by the ringing of a cowbell, though more encouragement was needed to tear folks away from their in-depth discussions. Everyone was engaged, enthusiastic and positive. This atmosphere produced constructive discussion that resulted in numerous ideas

and suggestions that could improve the success and effectiveness of the TMDL process.

Before breaking for lunch, the afternoon session and “Marketplace” concept were explained by Tara. Participants could register their ideas for topics and issues for the afternoon discussion on several boards at the back of the room. Ideas arose out of a “marketplace” of participants’ interaction and discussion during lunch resulting in organic, interest-driven, participant-led



workgroups. Although the delicious buffet spread was foremost on people’s minds, eventually about twelve ideas for afternoon topics were posted. Robert and Tara narrowed the list to five workgroups in each of two sessions. Sessions were about 45 minutes long, as in the morning session, and were not actively facilitated by DEQ or DCR staff. Instead, DEQ and DCR folks were on hand to answer questions or address concerns or take notes. Topics which came up in the Marketplace included: **Education, Communication and Outreach**, another round of **Funding, Monitoring and Assessment Explanation**, **What’s next?: Life under Pollutant Caps**, and **Coordinating Trib Strategies with TMDLs**. During the discussion, note-takers and presenters from each group were identified. A short five-minute synopsis of each afternoon workgroup was given at the end of the session. These notes will also be typed up and distributed to participants.

Robert closed the day by thanking all participants and reassuring them that all comments and discussions would be considered by DEQ and DCR TMDL staff. Anonymous evaluation sheets were tossed into a box at the registration table and tabulated. Please see attached Evaluation Overview.

A conference call is planned for all facilitators to discuss what DEQ and DCR can take away from the workshop, and if/how we can use the workshop input to amend and improve the TMDL process. Overall, most participants “Definitely” or “Probably” would attend a workshop such as this again (58% and 25% respectively). Many evaluators had concerns about whether the workshop produced “applicable tools and assistance” that could be put to the ground in their watersheds, as only a third replied that they “definitely” came away with these tools, and another third replied they “probably” did. Overall, however, everyone who filled out an evaluation form believed that it was helpful to meet with other watershed enthusiasts and participants in the TMDL Implementation process around the Region (100% said “probably” or “definitely”).